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50 GOLFDOM MAGAZINE 1/76

NEWS OF THE INDUSTRY continued

American Golf Architect; Now His Artistry Shines

At last it looks as though the golf architect and his art are being understood and appreciated by golfers. Yet probably more than half of the golfers in this country just stand up and hit the ball and don't have much more feeling of the entertaining and instructive character of a golf course than they have of a basketball court, baseball diamond, tennis court or a football field having distinctive dimensions.

The story of the talent of the American golf architect is finally getting through. Thousands each year have been getting their delight in golf increased by learning that they are supposed to play a golf course with brains as well as with clubs and a ball.

There is a flowering of American artistry in golf course design that in the past decade has been recognized throughout the world of golf and has acquainted a multitude of golfers with an element in the game they did not know existed — the personality of a course and how it can beat you, or you beat it.

For some years, golf industry experts have been aware that British golfers playing their classic courses in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland were enjoying something American golfers were missing. The British played the courses as though they were human opponents and tactics and strategy were required to win. The British golf writers knew that their readers knew the courses. So those writers could report on how well the players played the courses as well as how they played the shots.

American interest in golf course architecture has been rather negative for many years. Nevertheless, we got fine courses with thoughtful amateurs usually being architects. Donald Ross and Willie Dunn and a few other professionals were active in course design but only Ross of the pros made much of an art and science of the work.

Attention of many American golfers was attracted to architecture in the past decade by too many

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courses being too long, too tough and too expensive to maintain. It did not make good sense to the golfers who had to pay the bills to have courses designed primarily for testing the championship capabilities of tournament specialists who were not paying for the courses.

When the reaction set in and American golfers began to think about an entertaining, testing and beautiful golf hole, the industry began to see that it had many good architects who created some classic results although not often given ideal terrain to work with.

Educational arguments have been developed about the features of a new course designed by Rees Jones, one of the gifted sons of Robert Trent Jones, and the famed father's design of the many courses. George Fazio presented some fascinating courses, among them the Butler National in suburban Chicago, where the Western Open will be played for several years. He is making a case for the good player as an architect and he has company in his class.

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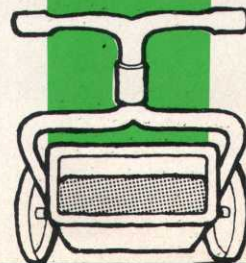
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